

Meditation may mitigate migraine misery

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A collective meditation in Sri Lanka. Image: Wikipedia.

Meditation might be a path to migraine relief, according to a new study by researchers at Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center.

"Stress is a well-known trigger for headaches and research supports the general benefits of mind/body interventions for migraines, but there hasn't been much research to evaluate specific standardized meditation interventions," said Rebecca Erwin Wells, M.D., assistant professor of neurology at Wake Forest Baptist and lead author of the study published in the online edition of the journal *Headache*.

The study was designed to assess the safety, feasibility and effects of a standardized [meditation](#) and yoga intervention called mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) in adults with migraines.

Nineteen adults were randomly assigned to two groups with 10 receiving the MBSR intervention and nine receiving standard medical care. The participants attended eight weekly classes to learn MBSR techniques and were instructed to practice 45 minutes on their own at least five additional days per week.

Study participants were evaluated before and after the trial period using objective measures of disability, self-efficacy and mindfulness. They also maintained headache logs throughout the trial to capture the frequency, severity and duration of their migraines.

"We found that the MBSR participants had trends of fewer migraines that were less severe," Wells said. "Secondary effects included headaches that were shorter in duration and less disabling, and participants had increases in mindfulness and self-efficacy—a sense of personal control over their migraines. In addition, there were no adverse events and excellent adherence."

Specifically, the MBSR participants had 1.4 fewer migraines per month that were less severe, effects that did not reach statistical significance. The [participants](#)' headaches were significantly shorter as compared to the control group.

Based on these findings, the research team concluded that MBSR is a safe and feasible therapy for adults with migraines. Although the sample size of this pilot study was too small to detect statistically significant changes in [migraine](#) frequency or severity, secondary outcomes demonstrated this intervention had a beneficial effect on headache duration, disability, self-efficacy and mindfulness.

Future studies with larger sample sizes are planned to further evaluate the impact and mechanisms of this intervention in adults with migraines, Wells said.

"For the approximate 36 million Americans who suffer from migraines, there is big need for non-pharmaceutical treatment strategies, and doctors and patients should know that MBSR is a safe intervention that could potentially decrease the impact of migraines," Wells said.

Provided by Wake Forest University Baptist Medical Center

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